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THE NEW POWER IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC.

BY HUGH H. LUSK.

THE establishment of the United States of Australia, under the novel title of "The Australian Commonwealth," is one of those events of history the importance of which is apt to be overlooked by most persons at the time they occur. It is natural that many should fancy that a political change occurring among a people occupying a distant country, directly connected with no other country, and not themselves what is known as an independent nation, can be of little moment to the rest of the world. In the case of Australia, such an idea is a mistaken one. The past history of the colonies now federated as one people; the relation which they occupy, and must continue to occupy, to the rest of the British Empire; the nature, position, and wealth of the great island continent which they have all to themselves; all tend to show that, in the advent of a United Australia, both England and the rest of the world have to do with a new power in the Pacific, whose influence must be increasingly felt within a very few years.

The nation of four million inhabitants just established in the continent of the South Pacific is, with the single exception of New Zealand, the youngest of the nations. Eighty years ago, it did not exist at all. Seventy years ago, it existed only as a handful of adventurers, set down beside a penal settlement, where something like twenty thousand banished criminals were expiating their offenses against society. Fifty years ago, it was a pastoral community, whose flocks were scattered widely over the fringe of an unexplored country, supposed by most people to be a vast desert, and looked upon, even by its own little band of pioneers, as only fit for growing sheep and cattle, free to roam over its wide plains. To-day, it is a people, small in numbers,

even now, when compared with the size of its territory, but energetic, enterprising, ambitious, and already wealthy beyond the experience of other countries or the dreams of most other nations. They have occupied the belt of land that encircles their continental island over a coast line of eight thousand miles; they have penetrated and explored the great interior plains of the country, till they have everywhere ascertained its general character; they have established agriculture suited to its varied climates; they have discovered and developed mineral treasures hardly surpassed in richness elsewhere in the world; they have opened harbors large enough to contain the navies of the world; they have built cities that rival most of those to be found in the oldest countries. It is no exaggeration to say that the achievements of the people of Australia in the last seventy years are unsurpassed by those of almost any other nation.

That they have owed much to their position goes almost without saying. Had it not been for the fostering care of the parent country—truly, a Mother Country to the younger members of her family—such steady and unchecked progress as theirs would have been impossible. Had it not been for her judicious control of their affairs in the earliest stages of their development, and for her equally judicious withdrawal from all interference with the management of their internal concerns, when they became ready and willing to manage them on their own account, they could never have adapted themselves to their conditions or developed their resources as they have done. But for the fact of their isolation in a continent that was all their own, too far from all other countries to be acted on by other peoples, too remote to be in any danger from their interference, it is hardly possible that they could have prospered as they have done, and quite impossible that they could have developed, as a people, the traits of national character likely at no distant period to render them important in the comity of nations. What her insular position has been to England, in assisting her expansion and determining her character, that, if not something more than that, it will probably be found hereafter, her continental isolation has been to Australia.

It must be remembered that there is nothing, except the single feature of isolation, in common between Great Britain and Australia. Indeed, it would be hard to find, on the face of the globe, two habitable countries that had less in common between

them either in climate or conditions of life. Whether the men who went there took up pastoral pursuits, as nearly everybody did in the earlier stages of colonization; or turned to gold mining and the many other employments that followed in its train, as everybody did in the second period; they found nothing to remind them of the country or the life they had left behind them in the little islands of the northern seas. They had brought with them the doggedly determined spirit which had been trained in the long centuries of England's slow growth, the adventurous temper which had taken her sons into every corner of the globe and made them the world's great pioneers of settlement, the heritage of equal laws and the instinct of self-government, which has enabled them everywhere to adapt themselves to circumstances or to compel circumstances to obey them. It was with these endowments that a mere handful of men undertook, something like seventy years ago, to exploit a continent and to build up a nation. It must be admitted that they have proved equal to the task. The story of Australian exploration has been written mainly by the hands of those who were the most active in the work, and no more remarkable record of human endurance can be found in the annals of any country.

At the moment of their consolidation into a united commonwealth, the people of Australia find themselves, man for man, the wealthiest of any nation in the world. They are in the unquestioned possession of a continental island, rich in land fit for settlement and industry, of every kind practiced in almost any part of the world by men of the race from which nearly all of them have sprung. They have already laid the foundations of a national prosperity dependent on no single product or industry, but embracing pastoral, agricultural and mining industries in almost equal degree; to which are rapidly being added manufactures of the kinds most suited to the circumstances of the country. Last year, the total value of the products of the colonies now forming the Commonwealth amounted to fully \$550,000,000, of which their pastoral industries represented fully \$150,000,000, their agriculture \$140,000,000, their mineral products fully \$100,000,000, and their manufacturing and other industries the remainder. This production was the fruit of the industry of a people numbering less than four million souls, and it therefore represents a sum of one hundred and thirty-seven dollars for

every inhabitant of the country: a sum which is probably twice as great as that representing the average earnings in any European nation, and at least half as great again as that in even this country.

And, in each of the departments of Australia's industry, there seems to be room for an expansion which is, practically, almost boundless. The hundred and twenty millions of sheep, whose wool alone was last year worth nearly \$100,000,000 in the markets of the world, occupy but a small proportion of the country known to be suitable for their support; and that country can, it is said, be enormously extended by the boring of artesian wells, tapping the vast underground reservoir of water which runs inland from the rainy districts of the coast, and underlies the central plains of the continent. The whole of the coastal districts, extending about eight thousand miles, by a width of at least one hundred and fifty miles, are suitable for agriculture—some of it the agriculture of temperate climates, the wheat, and corn, vines and fruit trees we know so well; some the rice and sugar, the tobacco and cotton, of the tropical zone. The land is generally rich, the rainfall in the coastal belt is abundant, and, strange to say, even the most tropical districts are not affected by malaria nor unhealthy for people of European race. The mineral resources of Australia are not even guessed as yet. In the last forty-eight years, the country has produced gold to the value of about \$1,800,000,000; in the last twenty, silver to the value of \$150,000,000. Iron, copper, tin, lead, antimony, have been found in rich deposits in many parts of the continent, and are being worked in a few, with results out of all proportion to expectation elsewhere; and coal, of every known kind, extends in vast beds through districts spreading over thousands of square miles both on the eastern and western coasts, while millions of tons are being exported, year by year in greater quantities, to India and Southern China on the one hand, and to North and South America on the other. And yet, as we have already said, the mineral wealth of Australia is but vaguely guessed at. The richest discoveries of gold and iron and coal yet made in West Australia have been made on the extreme fringe of the great unknown land, as yet untrodden by the feet of white men; the great coal fields lately found in Queensland stretch back, apparently unbroken, into the unexplored districts, known in the ex-

pressive language of the country as "The Never-Never Lands." Diamonds are found in one district, rubies in another; there is at least one emerald mine in New South Wales; and opals, equal to any in the world, are found in Queensland, while the pearl fisheries of the northwestern coast produce a considerable proportion of the most valued pearls of commerce.

We have thus glanced very cursorily at the history of the development of Australia; we have said something of its present wealth, and hinted at its vast reserve of wealth, which necessarily remains as yet rather guessed at than definitely ascertained. It remains that we should say something of the present position of the Commonwealth in relation to Great Britain, before we can form any reasonably certain forecast of the results that are likely to follow upon the establishment of the new Federation.

At the present time, the colonies forming the Commonwealth are the most valuable to England of any part of her great possessions. It is not merely that she has invested vast sums of money in Australia, in the shape of loans, both public and private, from which she derives a great annual return as interest, although the principal thus invested amounts to rather more than \$1,500,000,000, and the annual interest to fully \$72,000,000. In addition to this—and even more important than this—is the fact that England finds in Australia at present her best customer for the goods she produces, and, with the single exception of India, among all her possessions, quite her largest supplier with the raw material which she manufactures. Last year England exported to Australia manufactured goods to the value of about \$118,000,000, and received from the colonies now forming the Commonwealth the raw material for her manufactures of various kinds worth very nearly \$150,000,000. India, which is still of all her possessions the largest customer for her goods, imported goods from England to the value of fully \$156,000,000; but she only sent goods to Great Britain—and those to a large extent manufactured goods, and therefore less profitable—to the value of \$136,000,000. Thus the total trade during 1899 between England and India was about \$295,000,000, and that between England and Australia about \$270,000,000. The total export of India to all foreign countries in 1898 was valued at about a billion of dollars, while that of Australia was valued at only \$630,000,000; but the trade of India with Britain only represented three-tenths

of her whole trade, while that of Australia did not fall very far short of one-half of hers.

And if the new Commonwealth is compared with any other British possession, the contrast in her favor becomes much more remarkable. The case which suggests itself most naturally for comparison is, of course, that of the Dominion of Canada, both on account of its being, like Australia, an aggregation of colonies, and because it more nearly resembles the southern Federation in size, population, and circumstances, than any section of the empire. In the Dominion of Canada, England has a dependency with a population which probably exceeds that of united Australia, at the opening of the new century, by something like 1,400,000 persons. The total area of the Dominion is one-fifth greater than that of Australia. The colonies of which it is formed have—so far as all but one or two are concerned—been founded for a period more than twice as long as the colonial existence of Australia. In spite of all these facts, it is easy to show that even now the Dominion is of far less value to Great Britain commercially, and holds out a vastly less extensive promise of expansion to England's trade in any direction, than the Pacific Commonwealth. The total trade of Canada, to begin with, falls immensely short of that of Australia; for, while in 1897 all the foreign trade of the Dominion amounted in value only to a trifle more than \$275,000,000, of which England secured less than one-third, the foreign trade of Australia in the same year was valued at more than \$560,000,000, nearly one-half of which went to England.

The case of South Africa indicates the same results even in a more marked degree; as, even before the political events arose which have, no doubt, arrested the development of trade most seriously for the time, the trade of South Africa was insignificant when compared with that of Australia. It is also practically certain that it will continue to be so, even should a period of prosperity follow the war. The possession of gold and diamonds in rich deposits is, indeed, the only thing which can obscure the fact that a united South Africa can never compare, either as a field for settlement or a producer of wealth, with a country like Australia. And, even in this respect, it is too soon to assert that South Africa will long take precedence of Australia. The gold production of Australia, if less sensational than that of the Rand

mines during the last year or two, is, and has for half a century been, a great and, generally, a steady one. Her gold-fields already known to exist are spread over nearly every part of the continent, while they have only been fairly tested in a few districts, and exhausted in none. Her precious stones are far more varied than those of South Africa, and even of diamonds, more than 170,000 carats in weight have been exported from New South Wales within the last twelve years. What the future may have in store, either for South Africa or Australia, in the way of new discoveries of gold or gems, it is, of course, impossible to foresee; but, as far as present indications go, there is no reason to suppose that, even in those exceptional productions, the new Commonwealth is destined to be left permanently behind, while in every other she must, in the future as in the past, assert an easy superiority.

From a consideration of these facts, attested as they are by the irresistible logic of the statistics of years, it becomes evident not only that, at the moment of her entry on a political career as a united Commonwealth, Australia is by far the most wealthy and progressive of all the groups of British colonies in any part of the world, but also that, more than any other, she shares that wealth through the channels of trade with England. Already the trade of her four millions of inhabitants with Great Britain is nearly as great as that of India's hundreds of millions, and more than twice as large as that of the five and a half millions of Canada. The prospect, also, of its expansion during the first ten years of the new century are far better than in either of the other cases. Good government may, indeed, increase India's production; but there are a thousand risks from without and from within that may interfere with, or wholly prevent, any expansion of her trade with England. Prosperity in an increasing degree may, indeed, attend Canada; but it is natural, and indeed inevitable, that the United States, rather than England, will reap the principal advantage. Peace and development may come to South Africa; but there is every evidence that, at the very best, she has not the material advantages necessary to any successful competition with Australia, either as a field for Anglo-Saxon settlement, or as a rapidly improving market for English commerce.

There is, besides this, a still stronger reason why the influence of United Australia should in the future greatly exceed that of

any other part of the British Empire in its influence on England's policy, and thereby on the future of the world's development and progress. The people of Great Britain and Australia are all one people. It is true that their circumstances and conditions are very different, and eventually differences of character will follow; but so far, at any rate, the peoples are one. They are united by the same language, laws, religion, customs and traditions; and, if there is any difference, it will be found in this—that the Australian people are more enthusiastic Britons than the people who have never left the ancestral home of the race. Nothing could have proved this more clearly than the events of the last fifteen months in connection with South Africa. Strangers, especially Continental strangers, were astonished and impressed by the spectacle of peoples who were not involved in the quarrel between England and the Republics of South Africa, and had not been consulted as to the policy pursued, coming voluntarily forward to offer their sons and their money as a contribution to England's success in the war. In this, indeed, Australia, even with the addition of New Zealand, did not stand alone. The government of Canada and a part, at any rate, of her people joined in the movement, and sent men and gave money to the cause. But there was a difference, which is perhaps hardly appreciated in this or any other country except England herself, between the assistance given by Australasia and that given by either Canada or South Africa to her cause. In the case of the Dominion, help was offered and given to the cause of the Empire, but it was not given without a jarring note of opposition and hesitation; and there was no general enthusiasm for the cause. In the case of Cape Colony and Natal, help was given by one part, and that the smaller part, of the people, to a cause which they felt involved their own freedom and future existence—and it was offset by still larger, and equally enthusiastic, support given to the opposite side. In Australia, alone of the three, there was undivided enthusiasm for the cause. Money and men were freely offered by each one of the colonies, and the offer was as freely repeated when more help seemed to be wanted. Each reverse was met by a stern exhibition of determination to do their part to bring success out of failure, and each victory was hailed with a popular enthusiasm not exceeded in England itself. Australia lent more than twice as many of her sons to the cause as Canada did, and three times as many in

proportion to her population; and she was always ready to give more, had they been needed. To-day she has troops in China, and one, at least, of her naval coast-defense ships is in Chinese waters, as a contribution to the defense of British interests.

We have thus seen something of the position of the new Commonwealth of Australia at the moment of its entry on a united career. We have seen that it possesses a continent, less in area than any other, but second to none in wealth, or in the prospects of wealth; we have seen, also, that its people are already rich beyond other peoples, and that they share, to a far greater extent than any other part even of her own Empire, their trade and commerce with the mother country. It is evident, also, that, beyond any other of her great possessions, Australia can be relied on by England to sympathize with her in any difficulty, and to support her to the utmost with men and money. These things are understood by the mother country, and their importance is fully appreciated, as was made evident when the British Parliament passed with enthusiasm an Act to give the force of law to a Constitution framed entirely by the Australian people themselves, and securing to them a degree of independence never before given to any part of the British, or indeed of any other, Empire. The question which naturally arises is, What may be looked for as the result of the new departure in the political framework of the Empire?

Two results, at least, would seem to be somewhat more than probable, within a comparatively short period. The Australian people are, as has been said already, an energetic and an ambitious people. The moving force which brought about federation was not so much any internal need, or any fear of possible interference from the outside which might demand a united defense, as a desire to have a greater voice in the councils of the Empire—if not directly and avowedly, at any rate really and potentially. Her people's imperial enthusiasm is partly one of natural sympathy, but it is also, in part, caused by the feeling that she has a greater place and career before her as an influential part of a great Empire than she could have as an independent nation. Those who know Australia best will have the least doubt that she will find means, ere long, to use that influence for purposes beneficial to herself. Her people were far from pleased with what was done in the case of Samoa; and it is safe to say that no such

policy of concession will ever command the assent of United Australia. The sphere of her first interests will, for the present, be confined mainly to the Pacific and Indian Oceans to the south of the equator. She will be interested in the Loyalty group, where France is established, and in the New Hebrides, where she is very anxious to establish herself. She will be solicitous about the Solomon islands, part of which are at present recognized as German territory; and she will take a very deep interest in the future of New Guinea, part of which belongs to Germany, and the rest, beyond the British section, is understood to form part of Holland's great but little used estate in the eastern Archipelago. These will undoubtedly be Australia's first cares, but she will not be content with these for very long. Siam, French and Southern China, and Borneo, are natural marts for her trade, which in the next ten years will be a rapidly increasing one; and, in relation to all these, she will expect to exercise large influence.

Upon such activities as these only one of two things can follow: United Australia must take part in—must almost certainly become the moving spirit in—the formation of a system of imperial federation which shall give her, and all other sections of the self-governing Empire, a formal and recognized voice in imperial policy, linked with a definite and recognized share in the cost of empire; or she must retire from the Empire altogether. England would sacrifice much to prevent such a contingency as the latter; and there can hardly be a doubt that Australia will be very easily persuaded to select such a destiny as the first would seem to hold out. The wish for the inauguration of some such federation is strong in the minds of British statesmen already; but they are wise in their decision to leave it to the other parts of the Empire to propose it. So far, it has commanded no very great attention, and no enthusiasm at all, in Australia; but the events of the last fifteen months have done much to advance the cause. It will need but a little experience of the ambition of United Australia to convince England that it is pressingly required; and it will demand but a very few years of Australia's wider political horizon to convince her people that she must regard the federation of her colonies as only the first step to the larger union of the Empire, in which she will undoubtedly prove a very important factor.

HUGH H. LUSK.